

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 001203

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

LONDON FOR GURNEY, PARIS FOR NEARY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: AH, THE "O'S!" - A VISIT TO OGUN, OYO, OSUN, AND ONDO STATES (PART 1 OF 4)

11. Summary. This is the first of a four-part report on ConOffs visit to four of the five former Alliance for Democracy Party (AD) States, that were taken by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2003 and 2004 federal, state and local elections. After one year under new administrations, all four States seem to be making progress in delivering critical government services such as free education, poverty alleviation and infrastructure improvements. The AD and its primary founding organization, the pan-Yoruba socio-political organization, Afenifere, seem to be floundering in their effort to find political significance in the southwest before the elections in 2007. Ogun State, more than the other three, was able to show progress the new administration made in only one year. Despite its proximity to AD-controlled Lagos State, we found AD had almost no visibility in Ogun. End summary.

12. (SBU) Ogun - "The Gateway State" and Home State of President Olusegun Obasanjo

Ogun State surrounds Lagos State on the north, east and west, seeming to crowd Lagos south into the Bight of Benin. Ogun, like the other three States visited, was once part of the now defunct Western Region and assumed its current borders only in 1976 when it was formed by the merger of the provinces of Abeokuta and Ijebu. The majority of the population is ethnic Yoruba or from Yoruba "sub-ethnic" tribes such as the Oyo, Egba, and Ijebu. State officials told us that the State has now equal numbers of Christians and Muslims. However, our casual observation of the numbers of women wearing distinctly Muslim head coverings and men in white Hajj skullcaps on the streets and in the markets gave the impression that Muslims are in the majority. On the main road leading into the capital city, Abeokuta, the first place of worship visitors pass is a well-kept, possibly new, mosque. There is almost a one-to-one ratio of mosques to churches in Abeokuta.

Economics

13. (SBU) The Right Honorable Titi Oseni, the only female Speaker of a State House of Assembly in Nigeria, arranged a formal presentation for PolOffs' visit on May 17. In our meeting were the Commissioners for Information and Strategy, Economic Planning and Development, Communications, Agriculture and Tourism. Oseni also invited fourteen members of the Assembly, including the lone, remaining Alliance for Democracy (AD) member, and a dozen press persons. Yosolaoluwa Akinbi, Special Advisor to the Governor for Economic Planning and Development, and one of two women in Governor Gbenga Daniel's cabinet, gave a lucid and detailed account of what this year-old administration has done already and plans to do. She pointed out that the State government has saved 2 billion naira in the past year in awarding contracts for government services by imposing a system of transparency and accountability. Akinbi said that Ogun is unusual among Nigerian States because only about twenty thousand of its five million residents work for the government. Job creation by the private sector is, therefore, a priority economic issue for the Daniel administration. The State has established the Ogun State Employment Generation Programme to train unemployed youths for agricultural and nonagricultural jobs. While in training, the youths receive 600 naira per week to encourage them to stay with the program, and are given favorable loans or grants of money and equipment to start up businesses after completing the program. Five thousand men recently completed the program at a cost of 80 million naira, and, according to Akinbi, this will generate 45,000 future jobs.

14. (SBU) The Governor's goal is for all his administration's projects to be fully funded by internally generated revenue at the end of his four year term. Describing some of the steps the administration is taking toward that goal, Akinbi said Ogun is cooperating with neighboring Ondo State to develop a Free Trade Export Zone. (Comment. The Ogun State government has contacted the Foreign Commercial Service in Lagos to discuss what assistance the USG can give to this project. End comment.) The State has also granted Agip Oil development contracts along its coastline. Speaker Oseni added that Ogun has already begun advance planning for the oil industry in Ogun through infrastructure improvements and

environmental impact studies. She said Ogun would not be overrun by tanker trailers and pollution as other oil-producing States had been. Agriculture and tourism are also high priority areas where the State hopes to attract investors and create jobs. Ogun has begun to rehabilitate old or abandoned citrus and cocoa plantations as well as establish new plantations. It has made large purchases of the federal government's price-subsidized fertilizer for distribution to Ogun's farmers. The State claims many scenic areas or historical sites, but there is, as yet, insufficient support for the 300% growth in the tourism industry that the Governor has demanded. Although the roads in Ogun are some of the best-maintained that we have seen in southern Nigeria, there are no hotels, restaurants, etc. either along the road or in Abeokuta that would meet minimum Western standards.

Image control

15. (SBU) Commissioner for Information Niran Malaolu said the Governor's main public information message was "The PDP's (Peoples Democratic Party) taking over in Ogun is not just a fluke; it is a good thing for this region and will bring us together." Governor Daniel wants improved government services delivered to all the people. The governor is advertising Ogun's history of peace and security as a way to entice investors and create jobs. Daniel is focusing on housing, especially for the low income families, by offering "micro-mortgages." According to Malaolu, the administration is completely caught up on all salary back payments for state civil servants, pensioners, health care workers, and teachers, and has sufficient budget allocation to continue free primary education in the State. In another move to improve services and enhance transparency and accountability, Daniel has let contracts to an information technology company to install "e-government" systems to handle state government communications networks, payroll and pension systems, and contracting. Malaolu said these systems will "create easy access between the government and the governed."

Politics

16. (SBU) The Right Honorable Oseni then took the floor to describe the political scene. She said that the House of Assembly has 26 members representing 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Ogun did not create any new LGAs because, according to Oseni, they "didn't need them." During the past year in office the Assembly has passed 158 resolutions and seen 12 legislative bills signed by the governor. Ogun was the first State to pass a Children's Rights Bill that guarantees its citizens such things as free primary education. The House holds its session in the Yoruba language every Wednesday, and has "Governor Explain This" meetings once every quarter where legislators are allowed to quiz the governor on his executive actions. All general sessions of the Assembly are open to the public and records of all sessions are published and for sale to the public. Oseni said some of her priorities are improving Assembly staff benefits and refurbishing the Assembly's public spaces. She invited us to sit in briefly on one of the Assembly's sessions in its newly refurbished chamber. In closing, Oseni said the legislators are very interested in US exchange or training programs for legislators.

17. (SBU) Biographic note: Justus Olugbenga Daniel was born April 6, 1956. He is the son of a Protestant clergyman. He was educated entirely in Nigeria and holds a degree in engineering and an MBA. In 1990, after holding managerial positions with several international engineering firms, he founded his own successful company, Kresta Laurel, that produces lifting devices and power generators. Daniel has established a non-profit organization, Gateway Front Foundation, that benefits, mainly, the people of Ogun State. He is married to Yeye Olufunke Daniel and has four sons and one daughter. Daniel has been active in politics since his undergraduate days at Lagos Polytechnic and University of Lagos. But he decided to apply his business management talents to running a state government only shortly before the 2003 elections. In 2004 he was named Best Performing Governor in Nigeria for 2003. He carries the traditional title of Otunba Adeoti of Omu-Ijebu. End bio note.

HINSON-JONES